



Helping People Help Themselves

February 25 – March 10, 2011

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SPARE CHANGE

NEWS

Making The Count:

Cambridge/
Somerville
Conduct 2011
Homeless Census

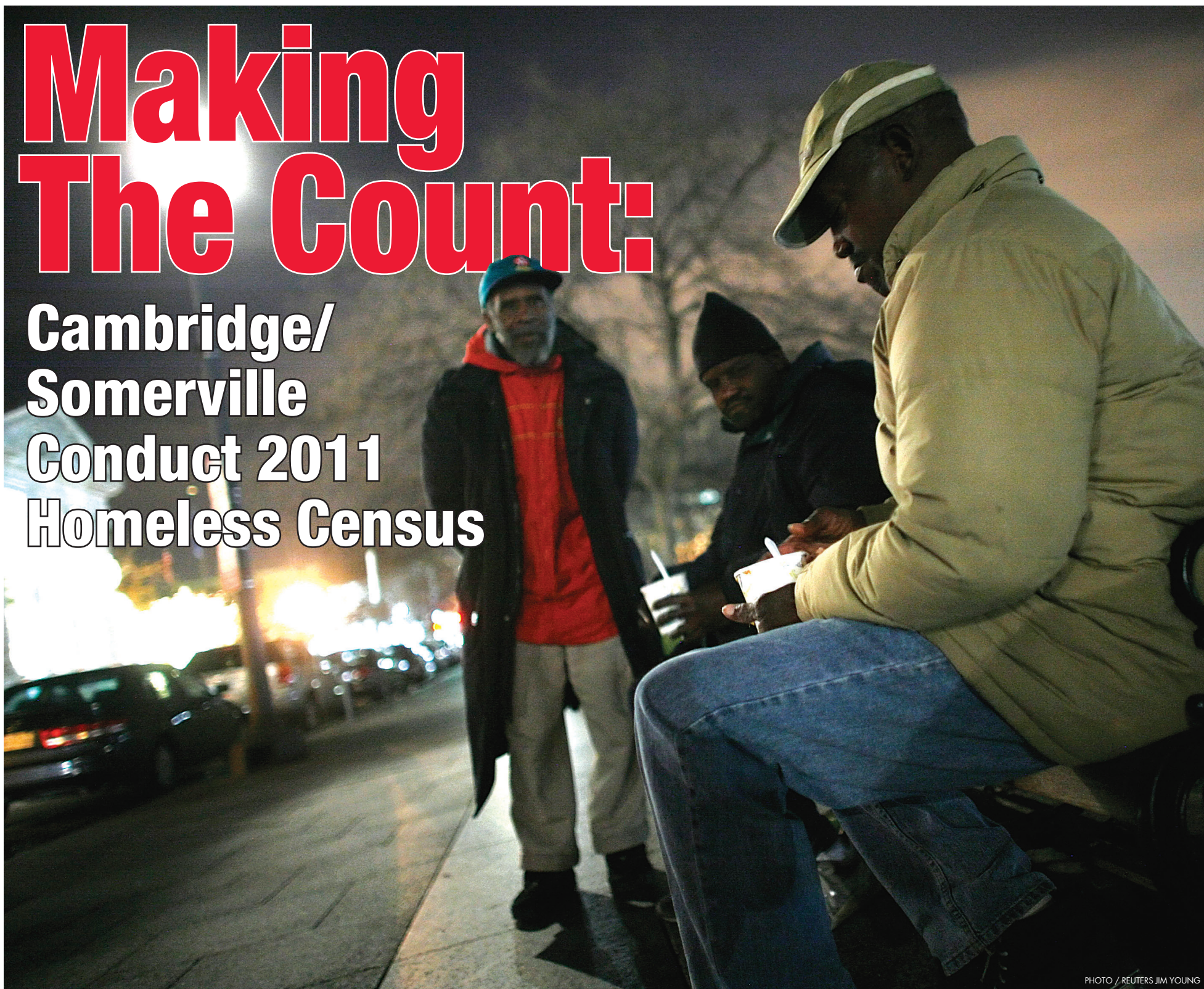


PHOTO / REUTERS JIM YOUNG

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Your vendor buys this paper for 25¢ and keeps all the proceeds. Please purchase from vendors with **fuchsia** badges only.

Spare Change News

is published by the HOMELESS EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (HEP)

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Elisabete da Silva.

PHOTO / COURTESY OF AURORA DA RUA



North
American
Street
Newspaper
Association

correction

In the last issue the photo on the poetry page was incorrectly credited to Janine Callen, who was featured in the previous issue. The photo should have been credited to Shay Kelley and Project 50/50.

Vision & Mission

Spare Change News was founded in 1992 by a group of homeless people and a member of Boston Jobs with Peace. Spare Change is published by the nonprofit organization The Homeless Empowerment Project (HEP).

SPARE CHANGE'S GOAL:

"To present, by our own example, that homeless and economically disadvantaged people, with the proper resources, empowerment, opportunity, and encouragement are capable of creating change for ourselves in society."

HEP'S OBJECTIVES:

To empower the economically disadvantaged in Greater Boston through self-employment, skill development and self-expression. To create forums, including those of independent media in order to reshape public perception of poverty and homelessness.

Global Voices

The 8th of March, 2011 is the 100 International Women's Day. Women's Day celebrates "the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future." We are now ten years into the 21st century and it's been more than 100 years since New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the right to vote.

The Street News Service asked women around the world, "Do women in your country enjoy true equality and how does it show?"

Name: Elisabete da Silva
Age: 42 years
Occupation: Vendedora / street paper vendor
City of residence: Salvador, Brasil

"Before, you never used to see a woman flying a plane or driving a bus here. Today I see this happening more. Women are becoming more equal in politics, too. In Brazil, for the first time, we now have a female president in power."

Name: Diane Edelle Kaneza
Age: 31 years
Occupation: Civil servant
City of residence: Bujumbura, Burundi
"Women do not fully enjoy true equality since they are still victims of injustice and violence. But, there is hope as more women now hold higher positions in institutions and are grouped in associations. They will claim their rights."

Name: Jenn Cross
Age: 34
Occupation: Office Manager
City of residence: Nashville, Tennessee

"Yes, in comparison to other countries. However, women still don't make the same amount of money as men on average. As I have experienced, age has been more of a factor than gender as far as income is concerned. I've found that being younger than some of my male counterparts has actually helped me financially. However, the difference between what my mother and grandmother had to go through and what I have had to go through is significant."

Name: Anna Dmochowska
Age: 38 years
Occupation: PR Manager
City of residence: Warsaw, Poland

"The modern world gives us all numerous opportunities for realizing one's potential. However, women in Poland are often willing to limit their professional activities for the sake of family life. Men on the other hand usually feel fully responsible for ensuring household income. Such attitudes have consequences in almost all areas of social life, thus fuelling the dispute on equal rights of women in my country."

Name: Ashlie Macanally
Age: 22 years
Occupation: Journalist
City of residence: Glasgow, Scotland

"Yes I think there is equality between men and women in Scotland. I wouldn't say there is a glass ceiling anymore, I think women have broken through it. And you even get househusbands these days instead of housewives."

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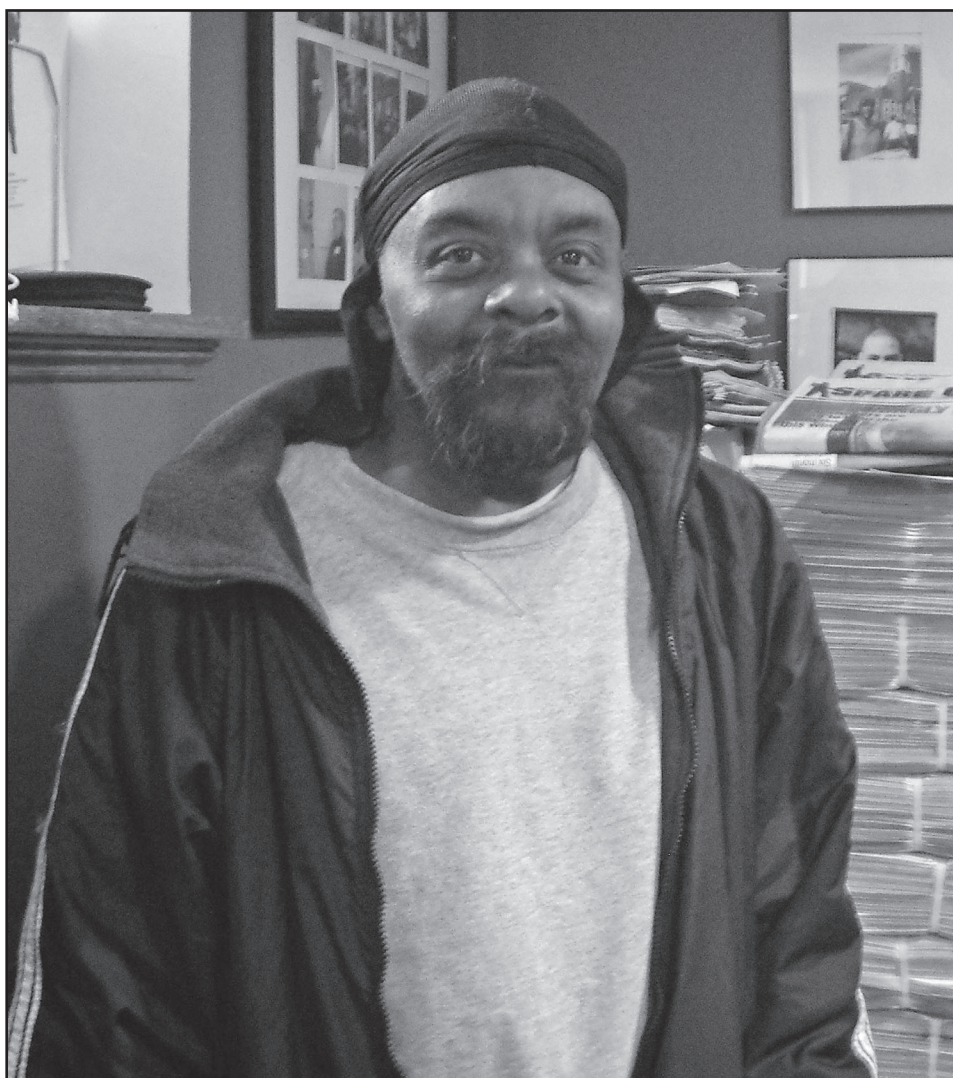
James Shearer: Fight To The Finish

Sumanth Prabhaker
Spare Change News

There was a hill right next to the school for wayward boys, where James Shearer attended classes as a teenager, and he used to race a classmate up and down the hill when there was nothing else to do. There was often nothing else to do, and James was in good shape, but he never won. The classmate didn't brag about this, because their races were so close. It became like a ritual for them: racing up, racing down, James just a few steps behind, lying on the grass for a while, and then waving goodbye, too out of breath to even speak. This went on for some time, at the school for wayward boys. James was a good student there, with a particular talent for journalism — he remembers one story he wrote about the New York Knicks, which everyone in his class seemed to love — but that was only the first half of his life, and James was, “young and full of energy and happy at any point to give up another hour of sleep if needed.” He had no idea of the twists and turns his future would take.

During his third year in high school, James applied for and was admitted to summer camps at several New England colleges. These were camps designed to give high school students a sense of what campus life was like, and to offer deeper entry into a certain field of study. James was planning to attend a writing program at one of these camps, the following summer. The school year ended a few weeks before the camp started, and it was during this time that James determined the course of his life was determined for the next few years. There is one afternoon in particular that he recalls with great clarity. It was raining. He and his classmate had found each other, and, despite the rain, were preparing for another race up the hill. They stretched their legs and they eyed each other and then they took off, James right away falling a few steps behind. By the top of the hill they were even, and James had more left in him. As they approached the trees that served as their finish line, James pulled ahead, winning the race by a nose. They slowed to a halt and slumped over on their knees. It was the first time James had ever outrun the classmate.

Even after regaining his breath and waving goodbye, James was still too tired to think straight. He walked into the nearest building, the guidance counselor's office, and sat on a chair



in the lobby, leaning in close to the air-conditioning unit. His clothes were drenched in rainwater, and a puddle was forming on his chair and on the floor beneath him. He gasped in the cold air. Realizing he had no purpose in there but to cool off, the guidance counselor shooed James away, so he ran back to his dorm, hot with sweat, cold with rainwater, as tired as he'd ever been. He passed out on his bed in a daze. The next morning, James checked himself in to the school's infirmary, complaining of a stuffy head, and the nurse took his temperature and immediately rushed him off to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with pneumonia. The doctors told him his recovery might take weeks. The school decided he couldn't go off to camp.

The news was something James would later come to see as a turning point in his life. He felt betrayed — by the rain, by his school, by his own body. He felt that he had missed his only chance at success. He dropped out of school with only one semester's worth of courses between him and his diploma, and he took to selling drugs instead. His mother kicked him out of the house, so he slept in an abandoned car near a friend's house. By the age of 20, he had

moved into a shelter.

It was his girlfriend's idea to leave New York City. They'd met in the shelter, but an opportunity had come up for her in Boston, so she packed her things and bought a bus ticket. On the morning of her departure, James helped load the bags above her seat. She didn't want to leave him, and he didn't want her to go, but the bus was filling up, and the driver had started the gas. So his girlfriend formed a plan: James would hide in the bathroom until they were well on their way, and then he'd just flush the toilet and exit like any other rider. Before he could think twice about it, he was pulling the lock on the bathroom door. The bus took off, and he got comfortable. They arrived in Boston a few hours later. “I never returned for all the things I left behind,” he says.

There were only a few shelters in Boston at the time. Homeless people would often be admitted and told to sleep on the floor, due to a shortage of beds and space. Possibly in response to this, all major MBTA stations were vacated at night and left unlocked. James moved in to a little spot in Park Street station. He says he never felt safe enough there to fall fully asleep, but it was roomier than the shelter. He eventu-

ally found work, first as a security guard at a strip club, and later on the floor of a waterbed factory, where he stained baseboards and sometimes made deliveries. A few months later, James was arrested for assault and battery, and he was sent to a prison in Walpole for two years. He describes these years as the loneliest in his life, a time during which he read Robert Parker novels, walked the grounds, lifted weights, and mostly kept to himself. His only contact with the outside world was a weekly telephone call from his mother. He was released in 1988. He doesn't keep in touch with anyone he met in prison, but he occasionally gets together with his friends from the waterbed factory.

It was Tim Hobson, a friend of James', who first approached him with the idea of starting a street newspaper in Boston. He was living in a shelter in Harvard Square at the time, and Tim wanted to enlist his help along with that of a few others. The idea was to create an approachable system by which homeless people could make enough money to find housing somewhere. Anyone who applied to be a vendor would just have to buy as many copies of the newspaper as they like for a discount. Vendors could then choose a place to sell them at retail price and keep the difference. There wouldn't be very much paperwork involved, and no one would be ineligible; the only rules would pertain to the conduct of the vendors while they were on shift. Having been homeless in Boston for over ten years by then, James knew that the history of homeless-run organizations in Massachusetts was extremely discouraging. At the same time, he had never been asked to help run an organization. “I never thought it would work,” James says, “but I couldn't say no.” He decided that, in addition to benefiting the homeless, the newspaper should be about homelessness and the issues that mattered to the people he saw every day. He wanted it to have a political voice equal to the *Globe* and the *Herald*, and to disprove the myth that all homeless people were lazy. In less than a year, James would become the newspaper's editor-in-chief, with each issue selling thousands of copies.

James remembers the exact thought that ran through his head during his last summer in high school. Alone in his dorm, or crossing the empty cam-

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Making The Count:

Cambridge/Somerville Conduct 2011 Homeless Census



Robert Sondak
Spare Change News

Cambridge and Somerville conducted their annual census of homeless individuals on January 28.

Cambridge and Somerville have conducted a joint homeless census for the past eleven years. The two cities have co-coordinated a homeless census because homeless individuals cross between neighborhoods like Porter and Inman Square that straddle both cities.

"The Cambridge/Somerville homeless census is a joint operation," said Fred Berman, Cambridge Department of Human Services census co-manager. "Since both cities share a border which homeless individuals frequently cross

over it makes sense to do the census together."

Berman also pointed out that a common border makes traveling between North Cambridge and Davis Square a daily activity.

"Homeless people routinely cross our municipal boundaries," said Berman. "Places like Porter and Inman Square are a close proximity to both cities."

The count of homeless individuals in shelters and transitional housing is coordinated by each city's municipal staff. The survey of unsheltered men and women in Cambridge is coordinated by the Department of Human Services under the leadership of Berman.

"The counts of people in our shel-

ters and transitional housing programs are accurate, the street counts represent our best efforts," said Berman. "We know, that we may miss some of the people, but it is inevitable. Some of the people staying on the street do not want to be seen and do a good job of staying out of view."

The survey of the unsheltered men and women living in Cambridge was conducted by six teams consisting of 4-5 volunteers and experienced professional staff. These teams followed a prescribed route throughout the city, and were led by professional staff from the Cambridge and Somerville Alcoholic and Drug Rehabilitation Program (CSPAR) First Step Outreach Program. This outreach program works

with homeless street men and women, engaging them with services focusing on mental illness, substance abuse and medical issues.

"CSPAR's First Step Outreach Team serves both cities," said Berman. "CSPAR operates the street outreach team program, and therefore its staff has the most experience, and is the most knowledgeable about what is going on."

This year's homeless census workers were a mix of experienced volunteers and first-time participants who were trying to build up community experience by working with the homeless.

"This is the first homeless census that I am working on," said Minka Vanbruzekena. "I am interested in devel-

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Bringing Harm Reduction Out of the Shadows

Katie Hyslop
Street News Service

Hundreds of doctors, politicians, researchers and frontline workers will get together with drug users and ex-users in Austin, Texas, this month to openly talk about drug use. But instead of reaffirming their commitment to the decades-long war on drugs, the eighth National Harm Reduction Conference will feature discussions on opening needle exchanges, legalizing and regulating the drug trade, and overdose prevention methods.

“What we do in (the United States) is make drugs as unsafe as they possibly can be, and we do that through laws, which means that if you get busted with drugs, you go to prison for a long time. And that’s designed as a deterrent to make people stop using drugs, which obviously it isn’t,” said Allan Clear, executive director of the Harm Reduction Coalition, which runs the national conference. “We do things like take syringes out of circulation, which has caused epidemics of hepatitis and HIV. So harm reduction is a way of trying to make drug use safer for people who use drugs, without demanding that they stop using drugs.”

Harm reduction can include a range of services from needle exchanges and condom distribution to safe consumption sites and access to addiction services such as methadone and buprenorphine treatments and detox facilities.

Supported by the United Nations and over 93 countries worldwide, harm reduction remains controversial. While over half of the 158 countries where drug use has been reported say they support harm reduction, only 82 countries have needle exchanges, just 73 provide opiate substitution therapies like methadone, and a measly eight countries have safe drug consumption facilities. There are only two safe consumption facilities in North America, both in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

“Insite” into harm reduction

“We were coming to work and people were overdosing and people were dying, and at its height it seemed like it was happening every day, and it just seemed unnecessary. If people were dead, there was no chance of detoxing,” said Mark Townshead. Townshead is the executive director of the Portland Hotel Society, which runs Insite, one of the two safe consumption sites in North America, open since 2003.

“[Insite opened] because lots of people worked hard to make it happen, including the mayor — all the different mayors



PHOTO / KEN HAWKINS

- and [Premier] Gordon Campbell.”

Insite is located in the city’s Downtown Eastside, often referred to as Canada’s poorest postal code. Injection drug users in that area have a mortality rate 14 times higher than the rest of B.C., with an HIV rate of 4 in 10, and a hepatitis C rate of 9 out of 10 users.

The facility consists of 12 safe-injection booths monitored by nurses. Clients are provided with clean syringes, cookers, filters, water, and tourniquets, as well as education on safe injection practices that limit the spread of diseases like HIV and hepatitis C. Injection drug use is illegal in Canada, but Insite applied for and received an exemption from the federal government to run the site, though the current government is trying to shut the facility down.

There are approximately 12,000 registered clients at Insite, but in 2009 only 5,447 used the clinic, with an average 491 injections per day. Four-hundred-and-eighty-four overdose interventions were performed that year, with no fatalities - in fact, no one has died at Insite since it opened, but the long lines mean some people walk away without injecting.

Because the local health authority funds it, Insite acts as a gateway to other medical services, such as treating infections and diseases and referrals to mental health treatment. In its second year alone, Insite made 2,000 referrals to outside services, including 800 to addiction counseling. There is also a detox center called Onsite located upstairs if people

want to quit.

Vancouver’s second safe injection site is less well known, likely because its clientele is limited to people living with HIV/AIDS. Located in the nursing clinic of the Dr. Peter Centre West End, safe injection is only one of the services offered, including access to medication, counseling, and art and music therapy. Unlike Insite, the Dr. Peter Centre has not applied for a government exemption for its safe injection room.

“The College (of Registered Nurses of British Columbia) confirmed for us that it was within the scope of registered nursing practice to supervise injections for two purposes: for the purposes of promoting health and preventing illness. And they went on to say that this is particularly so with a high-risk population,” said Maxine Davis, executive director of the Dr. Peter Centre.

Davis estimates there are 50 people out of the clinic’s 325 registered patients who inject drugs at the Center. The clinic is only open from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., however, so they also provide people with clean needles to take home, as well as providing a place to have their methadone delivered.

A different story on the island

The Canadian federal government opposes safe injection on moral and ethical grounds, and this stance has prevented other Canadian cities from opening their own safe injection sites, including B.C.’s capital city Victoria.

While drug users in Vancouver have access to needle exchanges all over the city, Victoria lost its only fixed-site needle exchange in 2008, after complaints about noise, crimes, garbage and human waste in the area.

The Vancouver Island Health Authority secured another location for the needle exchange in March 2008, but complaints from neighbors resulted in an indefinite hold on a fixed-site needle exchange. Volunteers drive mobile exchange vans in the city, but they have also been banned from that neighborhood, commonly referred to as the “no-go zone.”

“Not having a space where people can be and to feel like they can meet their peers in a safe location is huge. So you have people being very spread out and finding spaces where they can congregate, in spaces that aren’t that safe,” said Kim Toombs, a member of Harm Reduction Victoria. “People don’t want to be using drugs on the street, in front of other people. This is a private thing, and they’d rather be doing it indoors on their own terms, whether it be in their house or whether it be in a safe space. But they’re in a position where they don’t have any other options.”

A study released by the city’s Centre for Addictions Research this year found that in 2009, 23 percent of Victoria’s drug users reported sharing needles, compared to 8 percent of Vancouver’s; 89 percent of Victoria’s users injected daily, compared to 29 percent of Vancouver’s.

Despite the sharp reduction in services to Victoria’s drug users, the City of Victoria adopted a harm-reduction policy framework in 2004 and is working on a harm-reduction strategy. The public at large also supports it, with 74 percent of residents from Victoria and 12 surrounding communities agreeing with harm reduction in Victoria.

No needles in Nashville

The story is different in the United States, however, where the first needle exchange opened in 1987 in New Haven, Connecticut. In 1989, former Republican Sen. Jesse Helms introduced a ban on federal funding for needle exchanges. This ban was only lifted last year. The government has yet to provide any guidelines for funding the programs and many states are unwilling to move forward without knowing if their programs will receive funding. In addition, needle exchanges are only legal in 36 states, leaving 14 states, such as Tennessee, without one.

Nashville, Tennessee’s capital
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Families in Need

Tammy Callahan
Spare Change News



In 2006, my family was living on the financial edge. With no safety net, due to existing week to week the rent that we owed was starting to increase dramatically. No matter how hard my husband and I searched, the job market was just not producing for us, until eventually, in February of 2006, we were forced to leave our home and the city that I grew up in. I remember my husband telling me that we were only to take one bag per family member, and with no current financial resources, we had to abandon the rest of what we had accumulated together during the past 17 years. Revere, MA, became our new destination, and with a heavy heart my family ventured from the home that we had created and walked out the door for the last time. I was “shell-shocked,” yet I attempted to make our new move into an adventure, for the sake of my young daughter. It was to be an adventure that eventually made us not only grow closer as a family, but also made us stronger as individuals. We were blessed not to be literally catapulted into the streets like some families, however, with hesitation we grabbed our belongings and ventured through the doors of a family shelter run by Housing Families, Inc.

Founded in 1986, Housing Families,

Inc. in Malden, MA, in its early days sheltered four homeless families each night. The shelter has grown to provide a roof over the heads of over 400 families each day, including over 300 children. Their mission is to end family homelessness by providing safe, temporary shelter and support services to family members of all ages. It is a mission for which there is a growing need, due to more and more families being displaced over the years. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 41 percent of the homeless today are made up of families. These are only the known statistics since there are many families staying with other family members or friends, sleeping in their cars, living on camp sites, or simply sleeping in the streets. There are too many families under attack from foreclosures, evictions, job losses, lack of education, depleted affordable housing, and little or no income, especially due to the recession. Disruption of the American family and the lives they lead can create not only physical damage, but emotional damage to all family members. It is a devastating experience, but the help of a shelter and its services can provide new hope where there was once none.

One of the most important survival techniques for a family in a shelter is to keep the children connected to their school and their friends, if possible. Talking with your child’s school and explaining your situation may allow your child to continue attending the school they are familiar with. My daughter was given a ride to her middle school each day. When she started high

school, she became a warrior, refusing to give up the fight. Each morning as the sun was rising she would take an MBTA bus from Revere to Salem, to take the North Shore Tech bus from Salem to Middleton. She would repeat the process each afternoon, only to arrive home as the sun was setting. It may have only been a temporary place, but it was home.

It was during this time that we truly connected as a family more than we ever expected. The strength I witnessed in my daughter instilled strength in me, and I ended up going to a career center every day which led to many job prospects. Most importantly, not having materialistic items, such as a TV, made playing Uno for hours each night a family event. The full focus of our family was one of stabilizing ourselves. As our unity grew, our focus became clearer. We developed a greater determination to make our way back to our home city of Salem, to our family and friends, and most importantly to a new home where we could grow.

Eventually, we moved into an apartment back in our city and the process of continuing our stabilization became a part of our daily routine. We had endured many hardships, but we had also endured many blessings. My daughter is now living her dream, working in a salon as a stylist in Salem. Though we still struggle financially, my husband has been employed at the same location for almost four years in Ipswich. I have had the opportunity to meet people that I might never have met if my past situation had been different;

wonderful people who live in my heart, former co-workers, former managers, former residents that lived at the homeless shelter with us. I have also gained experiences that have certainly given me topics to write about and to advocate for the economically deprived.

Homelessness, whether it be individual or family-related, should not exist. It is a national issue that needs to be stopped for the sake of not only the taxpayers, but most importantly for the families that endure its repercussions. Finding refuge either on the streets or in a shelter should be something that no one, especially a child, should experience. “Home sweet home” should be a term that we are all familiar with, but what should be and what is the reality is too many people and families are still without a home.

Tammy Anne Callahan is a mother and grandmother who lives in Salem, MA. Tammy also is a monthly contributor to The Salem Gazette and on-line at

www.wickedlocal.com/salem/news/lifestyle/columnists,

Salempoet’s Writing Page www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/Salempoets-Writing-Page/191056360918357

She also writes articles as a Boston Examiner Grandparent on-line at

www.examiner.com/grandparenting-in-boston/tammy-callanan

Tammy is also an on-line freelance writer for www.suite101.com/profile.cfm/759355

Prabhaker continued on page 3

pus, he would think: If only it hadn’t rained. If only the guidance counselor hadn’t shooed him away for no reason. If only the nurse hadn’t noticed his fever. There was an almost visceral feeling that something had happened to him, that he had been conspired against. Sometimes a misfortune can be connected with something identifiable, and solved.

Sometimes the source is as vague as a cloud. In either case, James is determined to figure out the causes of homelessness, both his own and others’, and to work toward the solution. Twenty years ago, he was among the founding editors of *Spare Change News*, and he currently serves as the president of its board of directors. Having lived through the civil rights movement, he anticipates a homeless movement, in which a voice is given to the voiceless, and a definitive solution is found and agreed upon.

James Shearer is about to become homeless again. He sells *Spare Change News* in Coolidge Corner.



Shearer(third from right) at a Spare Change picnic, 2010

The Man on the Bench: Series Finale



Jacques Fleury
Spare Change News

Gulp Fiction

Beethoven's 5th Symphony played violently in his head with a demonic type of force, and it made him floor the gas pedal. Everything in his peripheral vision was rushing by as if he was in a race car. A sense of biting urgency was boiling within him. Speed! he felt the rush in his stomach, and his chest. He parked the car across from the motel and waited. Then, as the dark earth swallowed up the orange sun, He saw them. They were coming out of the motel with their arms around each other. Lola's head was partially resting on Julian's. They looked somber and somewhat pensive. He watched them drive away and then he decided to go back to the house and wait for Lola to come home.

The house was unusually quiet when Lola came home from work. The moon that hovered over the house like a halo, permeated the entire house with a luminescent blue hue. So Lola didn't bother to turn on the lights. The only audible sounds were those of the vast variety of clocks ticking all over the house.

"Carlton?" she uttered, but no response was forthcoming. "Carlton, honey, are you home?" Her voice began to crack a little with a modicum of warranted anxiety, given Carlton's unpredictable behavior lately. She went to the bedroom to drop her purse on the bed and her keys on the nightstand as she usually did. Suddenly, the bedroom door slammed shut from behind her and there was Carlton, standing in front of it. He was wild-eyed and snarling, like a lion engrossed in the brutal dance of predator and prey, with a long kitchen knife in his hand.

"So...how was work?" he said, menacingly and sarcastically.

"It wasss...f-fine...Why-why do-do you look like that? And what are you doing with a knife?" Lola desperately tried to hide her fear but her voice shook anyways.

She remembered that she had had the same fear, when her father used to sneak into her room at night when she was just 5 years old. He used to crawl into bed with her and sing her lullabies and tell her how much he loved her; and that if she ever told anyone, that she would be sent away and never see mommy and daddy again. His behavior continued well into her teens, until

one day she found the courage to fight him off. She was so angry that she went after him with a knife as he desperately struggled. She was angry at her mother for not noticing the signs, and for thinking that it was somehow her fault, when she finally found out. She had lived with this secret that had caused her shyness. Now, the knife was in someone else's hand and she could not help but think that this was her punishment, for what she tried to do to her dad.

She married Carlton because she had thought that she was damaged goods, and that, had she not said yes to his proposal, no one else would want her. She often felt like she was wearing a huge sign that announced her secret shame to the entire world, and that Carlton was the only one who didn't see it. After all, she was the daughter of well-mannered, well-to-do parents, so she felt that no one would ever have believed her had she spoken of her shame earlier. So now, with Carlton on the brink of madness, she had decided not to keep anymore secrets; she had decided to confide in Julian.

"I saw you! I saw you with him!" Enraged, Carlton's voice was raising much like the blood that had welled up in his eyes.

"You saw me with whom?" Lola pretended not to know what he was talking about, if only to buy herself some time.

"Don't play dumb with me. You always did make a lousy liar. I saw you with Julian at that sleazy motel. I eavesdropped on a conversation you two had once, while you thought I was sleeping. You were making plans with him in my house! It was soon after I was brought back from San Francisco." Carlton looked like a man who had just swallowed a bottle of hot sauce; his eyes were full of fire and fury. Lola was slowly backing away so not to inflame his rage any further. "Carlton, now... put the knife away, we can talk about this..." she said, pleadingly.

"Oh...now you wanna talk, eh? Don't you think it's a bit too late for that? Perhaps it would have been better to talk before you decided to be with my best friend!" Carlton looked completely unreasonable by now and it quickly became obvious to Lola that he had made up his mind about whatever his intentions were, Lola felt like a trapped animal. "Get on the bed now!" he commanded, and she reluctantly sat on the bed and stared at him, trying to guess what he was going to do next, hoping to think of a way to calm him down. He

grasped both of her hands then pulled a rope out of his pocket and proceeded to tie her up. Meanwhile, Lola's phone began to ring unrelentingly. "That's probably your boyfriend calling...I'm gonna make sure that you two never get the chance to make a fool out of me again!" Carlton barked, practically foaming at the mouth. He slapped her. She fell back, trying to wiggle her hands free. Her eyes widened in horror as she watched him reach for the knife. "You're gonna pay, now. No one makes a fool out of me and gets away with it, " He said as sweat poured from his reddened face. "You see what you're making me do? Why did you have to do it? Why?" He cried out like an trapped animal in agony. And just as he raised the knife aimed directly at her heart, a voice startled him.

"Carlton! You don't wanna do this! Please put the knife down!"

Julian had decided to come over. With the angels of good fortune on his side he had found the front door unlocked. At the sound of Julian's voice, Carlton bounded off the bed and launched at Julian but he backed up swiftly, just missing the sting of the blade. "You! I know what you were doing with my wife!" Carlton got into a semi-crouching position and launched for Julian once again and this time, he sliced Julians shoulder blade but Julian managed to knock the knife out of his hand and the two men began wrestling on the floor. Carlton had Julian in a choke hold and had managed to slide over to where the knife was and by the time he reached it and was primed to stab Julian right

in the chest, Lola's voice yelped from behind him, "Drop the knife Carlton! Don't make me have to use this!" Lola had wiggled herself free and was now pointing the gun she had bought and hid under the mattress when Carlton began to act erratically. Something that Julian suggested that she do just in case he became violent. Carlton, having been startled briefly turned around, allowing Julian to quickly free himself from under him. Julian stood just as Carlton went after Lola, knife in hand and screaming "You're gonna get it now!" Lola fired the gun and to her surprise, it was Julian who fell to the ground clutching his chest. She started screaming and Carlton, panicked and scared, fled the scene while Lola frantically dialed 911.

A few days after the incident, Carlton was found wandering the streets looking disheveled and spouting gibberish. He was arrested and sent to a prison for the criminally insane until he was released to the streets five years later. Lola was jailed for manslaughter, for killing Julian. Having lost everything, Carlton spent most of his days sleeping on park benches, waiting for his lost life to come back and rescue him.

The End

Jacques Fleury's "Sparks in the Dark: A Lighter Shade of Blue, A Poetic Memoir" about life in Haiti & America was featured in the Boston Globe. Sample or buy the book at: www.lulu.com. 20% of proceeds will go to Haiti charity Partners in Health. For personal appearances or comments contact Jacques at: haitianfirefly@gmail.com.

Comments,
Questions,
Story Ideas?

Send a letter to the editor
edit@sparechangenews.net

A HOBOS LAMENT

By Eddie Sorez

Having paved my way
Now trying
To find my place
Upon this dirt
Wondering wandering
Alone again finding
Hobo's comfort out of
Tin cans besides
Drums fire fueled
By yesterdays news
Finding myself besides
Those such as me alone
Just trying to stay warm

THE LOBSTERMAN

By Carolyn Gregory

When he hauled them in
from way down deep,
the lobsters scratched him,
their claws hammering
into forearms, drawing blood,
their wet life dependent
on this battle
before they were tossed
into a tank.

For years, he floated
from one spot to another
on the beach,
hauling lobsters then back
to his shack under boarded up
spots near the seawall.

He carried a knapsack
full of old t-shirts,
a St. Christopher's medal,
avoiding the other brownies
hanging out under shingles.

Every day before he went out
on the boat,
the bottles, syringes and roaches
were tossed.
He hid stark evidence
that would lock him up.

WHERE KITES FLY (for Rosemary)

By Carolyn Gregory

Morning glories opened
in a cascade
when we saw each other
after Nebraska.

We climbed a hill.
Blue kites buzzed
like dragonflies.

Sitting down
above the winding river,
her tears fell
at the end of her marriage.

An old grief twisted
near my ribs.
Once another sky carried kites.

The wind blew around us
and time grew chilly.
A single hawk dipped
and turned in a draft.

PHOTO / REUTERS/HUGH GENTRY



Poems may be submitted to: Marc D. Goldfinger,
76 Unity Ave. Belmont MA, 02478

or email: sparechangepoetry@gmail.com. SCN cannot return poetry
submissions, and authors will be contacted only if their poems are published.

Every Thursday
Squawk Coffeehouse, 9 pm
1555 Mass Ave., Cambridge
Open mike for poets and musicians.

Every Saturday
Out of the Blue Gallery, 8 pm
106 Prospect St., Cambridge
\$3-5 suggested donation.
671- 354-5287

Every Sunday
Lizard Lounge Poetry Slam, 7 pm
1667 Mass. Ave., Cambridge
\$5. 671- 547-0759

Every Monday
Out of the Blue Gallery, 8 pm
106 Prospect St., Cambridge
\$4 suggested donation.
617-354-5287

Every Wednesday
Boston Poetry Slam, 8 pm
Cantab Lounge, 738 Mass. Ave.,
Cambridge
\$3. 21+. 617-354-2685

Second Thursday of Every Month
Tapestry of Voices, 6:30 pm
Borders, 10 School St., Boston
Free. 617-557-7188

Second Tuesday of Every Month
Newton Free Library, 7 pm
330 Homer St. 617-796-1360

Third Saturday of Every Month
Boston Haiku Society meeting,
2-6 pm
Kaji Aso Studio,
40 St. Stephen St., Boston
\$3. 617-247-1719

Poetry event listings may be
submitted to
sceditor@homelessempowerment.org

Project 50/50: Streets of Savannah Part 2



Story and Photo by Shay Kelley
Spare Change News

The Alamo is only two blocks up from the Quick Stop, but it looks like it should be abandoned. We pulled into the space in front of door 201, and I told myself not to be nervous about parking the truck there. Michael's brother cracked the door of the hotel room so he could see us before he opened it the rest of the way, and we stepped inside the dark room.

The girlfriend and the daughter were asleep on the bed with only the light of a television set illuminating their faces. The room was clean because it was empty except, for a pile of clothes in

the corner, and I tried to process what it would mean to live in a hotel. Unlike my situation, they don't have to worry about taking showers and going to the bathroom, but they do have to worry about paying that weekly bill. On the floor I could see the blankets where my friend probably sleeps, and I watched as his brother opened the fridge to retrieve one of the two bottles of water. There was a quart of milk on the second shelf, but other than that it was empty. He handed me the water before he asked me where I was from.

After telling them a little about my hometown, I asked him a dangerous question. "How do you pay for this room?" Both of the boys stiffened defen-

sively, but he answered with authority. "I do whatever I have to do to provide for that little girl. She's my world. But I'm always looking for new ways to do it the right way. I need a GED, but for the time being...." His voice trailed off as he walked across the room to retrieve something from the nightstand next to the bed. "I'm going to try to learn how to make these..." he said as he handed me a flower that had been twisted from the leaves of a palm tree. It was beautifully made. "I can sell them to the tourists in the parks for a couple bucks. If I sell more than 100 of them a week, I can probably pay the bill here and afford some food without having to do anything criminal," he explained.

Looking at the beautiful flower, I tried to imagine the likelihood of creating and selling 100 of these each week, while providing for and protecting a family. It would be so much easier to sell drugs. No wonder people get caught up in the sick cycle of street life; this is so hard. I thought my head was going to explode.

When Michael's brother pulled a cigarette out of his shirt pocket, he asked if we could move the conversation outside for a bit. He didn't want to smoke around his daughter. We stepped out of the room into the chilly evening air and once outside, they began to be a little more honest with me than I had expected. They discussed the contrast between fear and trust. Michael's brother explained... "I am amazed that you are willing to trust us enough to start talking to Michael at the gas station. To let him in your truck! To come inside the hotel room. Normally, we are more likely to stick a gun in your face and take your money than look you in the eye. But because you are willing to trust, so are we. Greet trust with trust."

When I said goodbye for the night, Michael asked me what I was doing the next day. I told him that it was going to be a long day, because I needed to collect 125 food items to reach my goal for the week. I explained that I find a nice neighborhood and collect stuff, and then I take it to the shelter or the soup kitchen and donate it. "It's just like Robin Hood, but without the stealing," I said. He laughed and told me he knew a neighborhood we could go to, and maybe I would get done faster with some help. I stared at him. No one had ever offered to help before. I explained again. "I knock on doors. It's not that fun. People tell me 'no' a lot" I said. He shrugged. "I don't care. I'm not afraid of people telling me no. What else am I gonna do all day? I'll just be hangin out, tryin to get a couple bucks... but what you're doin might actually do somebody some good."

I couldn't argue with that. "Then I'll pick you up at 10."



Voices From The Streets

Voices from the Streets — a forum for those whose voices are too often ignored. From narratives to opinion to advice, these writers portray a unique perspective on life that might otherwise go unnoticed. Below, find that turning an ear towards those normally silenced opens the door to understanding and relating to those who have faced life on the street.

A Communiqué



Marc Goldfinger on his motorcycle

Marc D. Goldfinger
Spare Change News

I was in a cab and I heard it come over the radio. Open season on peace freaks, bikers, hippies, and children with tears in their eyes. They are taking the word LOVE out of the dictionary. All books of philosophy are to be burned. Poets are to be crucified during the next full moon.

All natural bodies of water are to be designated as cesspools and toxic chemical dumps. Factories which deal with poisons are to be located only on rivers for easy disposal access. All environmental agencies are to be disbanded effective immediately and all dissenters put to death.

All endangered species must be immediately eradicated to eliminate superfluous paperwork.

Members of the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, GreenPeace, and communes such as the Farm are to be shot on sight for un-American activities. No prisoners are to be taken.

Members of anti-nuclear groups are hereby classified as practitioners of Black Magic and Witchcraft, and are to be burned at the stake as examples in front of operating nuclear power plants across the country.

From this date onward, there are to be no limits set on radioactive emissions for the good of our industrial power base. All licens-

ing and restrictive regulatory procedures are hereby lifted and construction is to begin on all planned nuclear facilities post-haste.

All liberal arts courses, philosophy, ecology, psychology (with the exception of studies in electronic and chemical mind control), religion, and courses dealing with psychic development are to be irrevocably cancelled and all instructors of said courses are to be interned in reconditioning camps. All independent thinkers and individualists are to be permanently eliminated for the well-being of society at large.

All basic truths are now subject to governmental review and will be revised accordingly.

Abortion will be punishable by death and all women's rights groups will be permanently disbanded. Any women involved in such subversive activity will be imprisoned by honorable male chauvinist pig judges. The rights of women to vote are hereby rescinded until it is proven that they know their place.

All child labor laws are eliminated for the good of the economy. The minimum wage is also hereby abolished.

Blacks, Jews, Indians, intellectuals, and all other minority groups may be taken as slaves and those who will not submit willingly are to be shot.

Any type of dissent is hereby outlawed for it threatens the harmony of the great techno-

continued on next page

tales from the curb

Don't Have the Time



James Shearer
Spare Change News

Last week while selling papers two people came up to me and offered to give me a dollar, but didn't want the paper. They both said they didn't have the time to read, not just the paper but anything. One person did end up taking it anyway after a little coaxing, but I began to wonder about that statement: "don't have the time to read."

As an avid reader, I really don't understand why people can't find the time to read, but then again, maybe I do. We live in a society that doesn't seem to have much time for anything. We like to have everything fast, and who do I blame for this? Well, technology of course. Our Executive Director says he's heard this argument before, and I guess to him it's a rather tired one. He says that most 20-somethings have never had to live without the internet.

Don't get me wrong, I marvel at the advances we have made with technology, and yes, I enjoy email as much as the next guy. However, technology has made us lazy. We want what we want, and we want it now. I watch people every day, young and old, walk by as I sell the paper and there either on a cell phone, an iPod, or texting like mad. Do you think people who text and drive are dangerous? The ones who text as they walk are just as bad. When I ride the T, everyone is on their cells or laptops or something, that whole "See Something, Say Something" thing is a lost cause on these folks.

Part of Boston's charm used to be watching people communicate on their commute, or reading a book on their way to work. Now, no one talks to each other. Simple things like asking for directions have given way to the GPS. Who

the hell needs a GPS on their cell phone? As for the reading part, well, I like a good book, and magazine writers tell a good story. But, how can you possibly feel the words by reading a book on the net?

We like our news the same way we like our food, fast, and neither is really good for you. One makes us physically unhealthy, the other, mentally unhealthy. Think about it, when you read the Metro, are you getting the whole story or half of it? When you read sound bites on line are you getting the whole story or even a factual one? I'm sorry, but a machine can't engage me the way a good old news story with ink can, or, for that matter a good book.

I've tried. I even get the Globe by email, but I never read it. I'd rather shell out the two bucks for the real thing. I know it seems like I'm knocking all this technology, but, as I said, I'm not. We just need to sit back and take our time and not be in such a rush. We need to talk to each other, and enjoy each other's company, and I don't mean through a conference call, but in person.

Get off your damn cell phone and say hello to the person in front of you! Take the time to sit by a fire and read a good book, and I don't mean those stupid electronic book things, or whatever they are. Stop with the \$69.99 family plans and talk to your children and read the news, not having the talking heads on Fox or MSNBC give you their take on it.

As for me, well, our former Editor Emily (Dam I miss that girl) used to call me a dinosaur, and I guess I'm proud to stay that way. However, right now I need to stop at McDonald's and grab a burger and check my texts. See you later.

Annie Lennox visits street paper in Malawi



Annie Lennox and The Big Issue Malawi’s executive director Omega Chanje look at recent issues of the magazine.

Lameck Masina and Danielle Batist
Street News Service

Pop star Annie Lennox was wowed by street paper vendors serenading her at The Big Issue office in Blantyre on Friday. The visit to the Malawian capital was part of her first trip as a Scottish Parliament-appointed envoy.

Addressing the street paper’s vendors and support workers, Lennox said: “I think you are doing great work. The street paper has transformed people’s lives at a grassroots level. The effort your organisation puts in from the top trickle down and that is very important.”

The magazine, set up with sup-

port from Glasgow-based charity, International Network of Street Papers (INSP), has enabled 400 homeless and vulnerably housed vendors to earn a living since its launch in 2009. Funded by the Scottish Government, the magazine prints 1,500 copies every two months and is sold on the streets of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu, Zomba and Mangochi.

INSP’s Executive Director Lisa Maclean said: “We are very proud of The Big Issue Malawi for the work they are doing getting people experiencing poverty and homelessness off the streets and into work. The Scottish Government has been a tremendous supporter of the

partnership between INSP and The Big Issue Malawi and their contribution to our poverty alleviation work in Malawi has been significant. The successful visit of Annie Lennox today will only help to further endorse the good work of The Big Issue Malawi in the years to come.”

Following a tour of The Big Issue Malawi’s distribution office, Lennox invited vendors to sing some songs with her. She said: “Music is a great vehicle for sending messages to people. It is an international language.”

Referring to her own SING campaign against HIV / AIDS, she said: “When you come to any African country, the first thing that happens is that people sing. We did it today and when we go ahead to other places, this is what happens. I called my campaign SING for that reason.”

A long-time campaigner, Lennox witnessed positive change in the area of HIV / AIDS prevention on her latest visit to the African country. “My campaign is about talking, about [creating a] dialogue, because this is about fighting a stigma. Keeping silent is deadly, but transformation is taking place in Malawi. I have been to places where ten years ago things would have been different.”

“I visited villages where people living with HIV / AIDS would have been cast out ten years ago. Instead of that, tribal chiefs are now welcoming people living with HIV in the community - giving them support and not discarding them and excluding them. The stigma is slowly being reduced.”

Malawi ranks among the world’s least developed countries. The majority of young, urban adults search for jobs that do not exist and frequently become homeless. The stigma surrounding homelessness is huge, as it is often associated with begging, sex work and HIV, leading to the exclusion of homeless people from society. The Big Issue Malawi works to address many of these problems.

ing in the country, Lennox praised the efforts of the street paper: “This is real grassroots transformation and I am very encouraged by what you are doing. Everyone can play a part [in creating change]. I am just one person and I do as much as I can. Together we can inspire other people to start to focus and stay committed.”

The Big Issue Malawi’s Executive Director Omega Chanje-Mulwafu was “delighted” with the visit by the Scottish celebrity, claiming her encouraging speech “will boost the vendor morale”.

Sara Sangaya is one of the street paper’s vendors in Blantyre. “I am a widow looking after orphans and I get much of my needs covered from selling the magazine in the streets. Though I cannot fulfill all my requirements yet, I am certain that I will make a step forward with the help of The Big Issue Malawi.”

Scottish Parliament Presiding Officer Alex Fergusson joined Lennox on part of her visit to Malawi. The President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Scotland Branch (CPASB) said he was “highly impressed” with the efforts made by Scottish and local NGOs on the ground.

Just hours after his return to Scotland, he commented: “The poverty you encounter when you visit a country like Malawi is at a level we don’t have here in Scotland. The problems are huge, but what I came away with is a realisation that by putting in very little, you can achieve an enormous amount.”

“We visited many projects supported by Scottish NGOs and organisations. One hospital matron had tears in her eyes when she told us how much child mortality had decreased since a new ward was built. That touches you. Annie [Lennox] and I are both convinced of the need for continued support in Malawi. We want to tell people in Scotland: ‘Don’t stop the work you’re doing. It is making a huge difference.’”

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logical society.

All newspapers are to be taken over by the government, the oil and nuclear power industries, and the other five large industrial conglomerates that now own and control all business in this country, for the good of the common man. In this way it can be assured that no questionable propaganda may be presented to the public at large.

Naturally, long hair and beards are against the law and those in defiance shall be persecuted to the fullest extent. Bald heads are also included in the acts to be prosecuted, especially if you are a woman with a bald head or purple hair.

All libraries are to be closed as of this date until purged of those books which may offend the sensibilities of the controlling power structure. (In many ways this aspect of my fictional piece is actually taking place. Notice in your local library and that older books are disappearing from the shelves.)

The words GOD and MONEY are to

be made synonymous with each other; they mean one and the same. After all, on U.S. money it does say “In God We Trust.”

All outcries against pollution are to be silenced with deadly force.

All materials and resources that are in the Earth shall be declared man’s sole property and will be exploited regardless of the results.

These dictates will take effect immediately.

All those with questions and doubts should proceed immediately to their local police station where they will be interrogated and treated accordingly.

We can assure you that “we are doing this for your own good.”
(it can’t happen here)
(hmmmm)—Zappa

Marc D. Goldfinger is a formerly homeless vendor who is now housed. He can be reached at:junkietroll@yahoo.com

Please be sure sure that you purchase copies of

Spare Change News only from

authorized vendors who wear

Fuchsia 2011 badges.

Anyone else may be running a scam. Vendors are

also not allowed to solicit donations for

Spare Change News or any outside organization.

Letter to the Editor

Editor's note: This is a letter that two homeless activists, Jay Tankanow and Amy Grassetto, have sent to the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the state board that regulates pharmacies, and several newspapers about people being denied medications at Massachusetts pharmacies because of their inability to afford the co-pay or their lack of proper ID. In an effort to quantify how large a problem this is, activist Jay Tankanow would like to hear from you if you have been denied a medication for these reasons. You can reach Tankanow at jaytank10@comcast.net or 781-215-1945.

To Whom It May Concern:

What is more important, a dollar co-pay or someone's health and well being?

Pharmacies all over Massachusetts are playing games with people's lives while taking their insurance money from Mass Health. We have received numerous complaints about people going into a local pharmacy; (who have Mass Health), and being denied their medication because they don't have the one dollar co-pay.

There are also many other situations in which these people are harassed and

made to feel like a second rate citizen because they do not have the money, are homeless, or are just unable to make ends meet.

What is the use of having pharmacies; that make an enormous amount of money from Mass Health insurance, and do not follow Mass Health guidelines? Yes, it's cheaper to deny medication and bury people in unmarked graves.

It is time for your agency to protect the poor and indigent; not the rich, who can pay their co-pays. We are requesting that all pharmacies in Massachusetts post the following statement at their

pharmacy registers:

If your prescription is covered by Mass Health and you are not able to pay a co-pay at the time of service, the pharmacy must still fill your prescription; however, the pharmacy can bill you later. You should not go without necessary medications because you can not afford a co-pay now".

The second large issue facing many people, and the homeless population in particular is the lack of proper ID to pick up prescriptions. In most cases, homeless people do not have an ID and/or lack resources to obtain an ID. We need

to come up with a solution for those who need their medication, but lack the ability to get it.

Sincerely,

Jay Tankanow—LSW
Community Activist

Amy Grassetto—Consumer
Advisory Board Member
Community Health Link—Worcester
Chair-National Consumer Advisory
Board-Health Care for the Homeless

SONDAK continued from page 4

oping community outreach experience,

"This maybe an important skill in my future career search."

Jason Betterncort, a professional staff person from CSPAR, spoke about his participation in the census.

"I am part of the Cambridge First Step Outreach Night Program," he said. "I do a lot of outreach with old school homeless who are set in their ways and alcoholic dependence."

The original date of the census had to be changed due to inclement weather. "The 2011 count was moved up one day because we didn't want to go out during a heavy snowfall," said Berman. "Other communities went ahead with their count during the snowfall and probably countered fewer people in unsheltered situations."

Berman noted that the results of the 2011 census were not yet available.

"The census is still being tabulated," said Berman. "The city is awaiting data from human service agencies that provided shelter or transitional housing to Cambridge homeless individuals the week of January 28 census."

Berman highlighted that the 2010 census is available and reported a sheltered count of 193 homeless individuals, similar to census results in 2007 and 2008. A street count of 61 individuals was recorded and that paralleled 2008. The one major area of change in the homeless census concerned homeless families and was reflective in a reduction in the number of homeless families in state funded units of family shelter within the city (from 32 to 27 units) and also a decrease from (73 to 38) in the number of metro Boston families temporarily



sheltered by the state at the Cambridge Gateway Inn. Overall the census reported a 12 percent drop in homelessness from 637 in 2009, to 559 for 2010.

"Counting the unsheltered homeless is an inexact science," said Megan Goughan, director of CSPAR's first Step Outreach Program and census co-manager. "The counting of the unsheltered is largely weather-related."

Goughan noted that 2009's street count of 40 individuals was so much lower because of icy street conditions

and a foot of snow blanketing the city, forcing otherwise unsheltered individuals into protective situations.

According to Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, changes in homeless families counted by the census reflected state trends of aggressively utilizing federal stimulus funds to move families out of motels and prevent new homelessness. In Cambridge alone, 95 households have received rental or utility assistance to prevent or end their homelessness

under the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program.

The 2010 homeless census has helped Cambridge receive 3 million federal dollars to address, among other things, homeless and housing placement.

The city is continuing to work to leverage its partnerships with the state, HUD, and with local non-profits to ensure that Cambridge residents receive the help they need to remain housed and end homelessness.

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city, runs harm-reduction programs on both sides of the law. The city’s Annual Vulnerability Index, released in October, interviewed 885 homeless people (out of an estimated 4,000) and found that 64 percent had abused substances at some point, while 44 percent had received addiction treatment.

There was a tolerated needle-exchange program in 2001-2002, recognized by City Hall as well as the local law enforcement, but for reasons unknown the exchange died off, and now clean needle distribution has gone underground. Legal harm reduction comes in the form of mobile outreach vans run by groups such as Street Works, which offers free HIV testing, condoms and lubricant to drug users, sex workers, and the homeless.

Leslie Davis, outreach team leader for Street Works, has been doing harm reduction work with the organization for 10 years. Davis says needle use is actually down in the city, likely because the grade of heroin has improved and can be snorted or smoked instead, which decreases the chance of contracting HIV / AIDS.

Davis wants more than clean supplies to pass out, though. He also wants to see drug use decriminalized and treatment focused on lifting users out of poverty, as well as counseling for the personal traumas that led them to drug use in the first place.

“There are success stories around. At Street Works, we have several success stories ... people celebrating five or six years clean. ... (But) the odds of turning your life around are not good,” he said. “I’ve seen ‘em die in this town and never get clean.”

Conservative Cincinnati

Like Tennessee, needle exchanges are illegal in Ohio unless they are sanctioned by a city’s health commissioner under an emergency order. Such an order was issued in Cleveland, where a needle exchange has been operating since 1995. At that time, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 17 percent of the city’s new HIV infections were among IV drug users. Today that number has dropped to 3.4 percent.

But it’s a different story in Cincinnati, where it’s a crime to possess a dirty syringe, regardless of whether you’re the user or a volunteer at a needle exchange. While both the city’s mayor and health commissioner say they support a needle exchange in theory, STOP AIDS Cincinnati, a local AIDS prevention and support group that operates on a harm-reduction model, must make the case for a needle exchange to the entire city council and health board.

“Cincinnati is notably a fairly conser-

vative city, and we have some groups in the city who kind of coalesce around what they identify as being family and community values, that are a little further out there than most of the community. But they do a good job rallying their forces,” said Amy McMahon, CEO of STOP AIDS.

HIV / AIDS levels among IV drug users in the city are 5 to 10 percent for HIV, while hepatitis C is much higher at 35-38 percent. It’s numbers like these that drive McMahon to push for needle exchange on top of the condoms, lube, and testing that STOP AIDS Cincinnati already supplies.

“While there are certainly statistically high-risk groups, (IV drug use) crosses all socio-economic groups, racial and age boundaries,” she said. “People with hepatitis C, and people who contract HIV do also. Statistically, is it everybody equally? No. But the risk exists because it’s your behavior that puts you at risk, not the color of your skin or your gender or your income.”

Methadone not covered in Midwest state

Needle exchanges are legal in Chicago, Illinois, but since the federal ban has been repealed, Dan Biggs hasn’t seen a flood of government money coming in. Instead, the Chicago Recovery Alliance (CRA), of which Biggs is founder and director, is funded by the Chicago Health Department and the Illinois Department of Health and has become one of the largest harm-reduction outreach programs in the country.

CRA provides the clean rigs and condoms common to harm reduction in other parts of the world, but also offers free vaccines for hepatitis A, B, and C, as well as the flu and pneumococcal pneumonia, through their mobile van and their office. But thanks to federal law that limits distribution of opiate substitutes to specialized clinics, CRA can’t provide methadone or buprenorphine to marginalized drug users.

“(Treatment is) not available to most people who want it. We are in a juggernaut to the most brutal, ineffective approach. Right now, I can’t get you into methadone treatment unless you have good resources — money. Most insurance don’t pay for it. (It costs) \$60 a week,” Biggs said. “But I can get you a cell and court date for \$50,000 a year. What kind of insanity is that?”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates there are 60,000 to 90,000 injection drug users in Chicago, but only 7,000 to 8,000 use CRA’s services per year. Biggs says some areas of the city see no service at all, particularly the southwest side, which has high rates of injection drug use.

Rocky Mountain High

Colorado became the 36th state to

gain a legal syringe exchange program this year, but each county’s public health board has to opt into the program, and only after that can a harm-reduction organization apply to become a needle exchange. Nor will users be fully exempted from state paraphernalia laws once the exchange opens. Volunteers will be exempted, but it’s a class II misdemeanor for a user to be caught with a needle, dirty or clean.

Denver, Colo., has an illegal needle exchange program, however, that’s been running since 2007, although previous exchanges operated in the late 1990s and in 2003-2004. Unlike some other illegal exchanges, the Underground Syringe Exchange of Denver actually has funding from the North American Syringe Exchange Network, the only group that will fund underground exchange programs.

“We average, probably, on one day of exchanging, seeing 5-10 people and exchanging 200-800 syringes in a three-hour block,” said Andrew, one of the founding members of the exchange, who requested his last name be withheld. Andrew assumes the large numbers of needles per user is people doing secondary exchanges, where they take dirty needles for friends and exchange them, giving their friends clean rigs in return.

Denver faces other challenges in getting a needle exchange, stemming from previous attempts to set up the service. A city ordinance on syringe exchanges was actually passed in the late 1990s, though no exchange was ever established. However the ordinance remains and restricts the number of needle exchanges to a maximum of three. They also must be one-for-one exchanges, and they cannot be within 50 feet of a dwelling. With an estimated 10,000-15,000 IV drug users in the city, the ordinance needs to be changed in order for the program to be effective.

“The fact that there’s still nothing happening is why we still have an underground syringe exchange. And it’s going to continue until we have an effective exchange running in Denver,” Andrew said.

Support for Harm Reduction

The fight for harm-reduction services, particularly needle exchanges and safe consumption sites, has gained ground in both Canada and the United States, but there are still hurdles to overcome.

Despite being the subject of 30 peer-reviewed studies by the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV / AIDS, which showed a significant reduction in public injections and in HIV and hepatitis C infections, as well as an increase in the number of users seeking treatment, Insite is in danger of being shut down by the Canadian federal government, which

cites moral and ethical issues with safe injection. After two separate cases before the B.C. Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, which ruled in Insite’s favour, the decision now lies with the Supreme Court of Canada.

“The Canadian Medical Association, normally a very conservative body, has stepped in twice to defend Insite, and they will be intervening in the Supreme Court to say, ‘This is ridiculous. (Prime Minister) Stephen Harper needs to give his head a shake,’” Townshead said. “You can find an opinion from a fool, but ultimately the information is in and the evidence is utterly clear.”

It’s not just the government that stands in the way, however. Members of the public who don’t experience the realities of drug addiction in their lives often do not understand the reason for harm reduction services, particularly because illicit drug use is illegal in North America.

“We live in a society that doesn’t often turn its thoughts to those who are least among us,” said Andrew of the Underground Syringe Exchange of Denver. “And injection drug use affects a very small portion of the population. So, since it’s not on their radar, and it’s one of those icky topics that they’re not interested in delving into because it challenges their moral boundaries, they just kind of look at it and say, ‘You know, let ‘em die off,’ basically.”

But Clear, of the Harm Reduction Coalition, believes it is the politicians, not the public, who are holding back harm reduction. With the retraction of funding bans on needle exchanges in the United States and the support of safe injection sites by the provincial courts of British Columbia, the future of harm reduction in North America is one of growth.

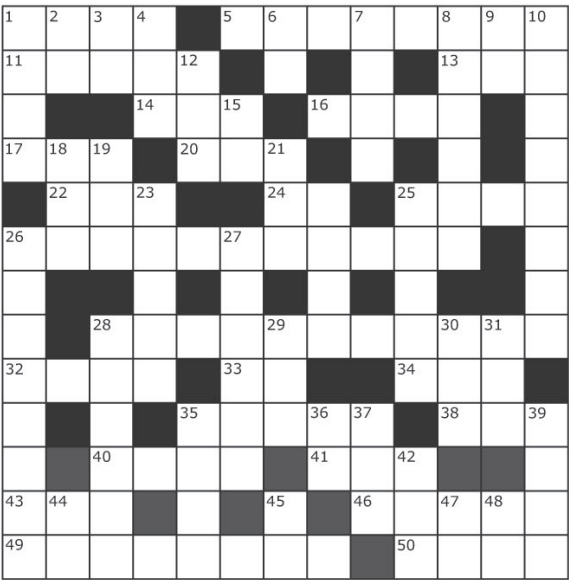
“The funny thing is that topic opinion polls, the few that exist, have always been pretty consistent that the general public actually supports them. It’s not overwhelming, but they are pretty consistent. It’s something like 55 to 45, or 52 to 48 in favor of syringe exchange programs. The general public has always been fairly supportive, especially if it’s explained what they are for,” Clear said.

“And I think that the changing in the legislation around the federal ban on the funding on needle exchange means that some of those programs that have been around for a while, but have not strictly been legal, will be tolerated a lot more by their local health departments. Hopefully we can build upon that, and then they can get funding and be legal and everything.”

This is a collaborative article from street papers of the North American Street Paper Association (NASNA).

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Black History Redux



by
Samuel Weems

Across

- 1 Rodeo star Pickett
5 Abolitionist Frederick
11 Oh no, *French*
13 Black Panther H. ___ Brown
14 Vase
16 In case
17 Org that barred 26 Down
20 Monday, *Spanish*
22 Fed agcy circa '30's & '40's
24 Rhode or Block: Abbr
25 Jazz composer Ellington
26 *The Color Purple* author
28 Aka Dr. Hugh Morgan Hill

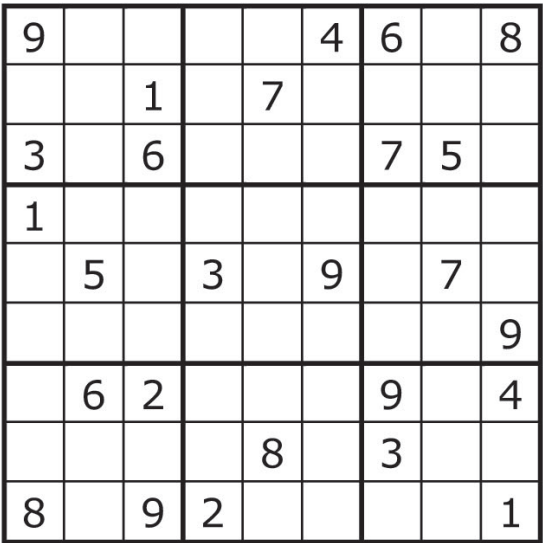
- 28 Aka Dr. Hugh Morgan Hill
32 Spirit
33 Marine biologist Dr. ___ Just
34 Yang's partner
35 Neurosurgeon Carson
38 Baseball Hall of Famer Gibson
40 Best of cards
41 Fed homeowner mtge program
43 Cap of state N of TX
44 State N of TN
46 Painter Crite
49 NBA champs 1970, 1973
50 Activist Coretta Scott

Down

- 1 Civil rights leader Julian
2 L K J ___ G F E
3 Rd
4 Activist Fannie ___ Hamer
6 Doctor of Optometry
7 "That's the way it ___."
8 Tennis champion Ashe
9 African nation: Abbr
10 *Malcolm X* filmmaker
12 U.S. Navy defense lab
15 Greek alphabet's 13th letter
16 Singer Uggams
18 Tool for making holes
19 MIT of Troy, NY
21 Nat'l org for newspapers
23 Fruit of the oak

- 25 Type of hat
26 Contralto Marian
27 Ethel or Muddy
28 POTUS's given name
29 Semitic culture: Abbr
30 Opp of Conservative: Abbr
31 Org with HQ in NY
35 Half: Prefix
36 CC DD ___ FF GG
37 Nat'l org of teachers
39 Detroit Mayor Dave
42 Spouse of 50 Across
45 All right
47 Land mass S of CT: Abbr
48 An orange & ___ apple

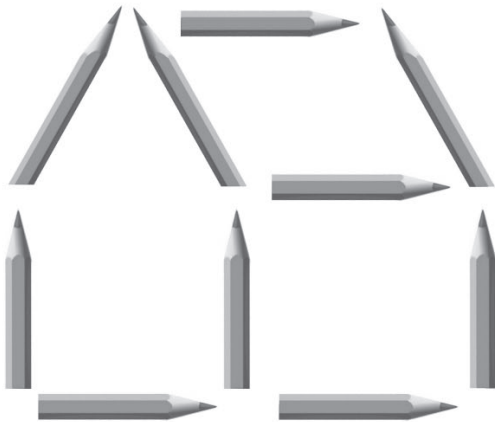
Sudoku



Fill in the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains every number from 1 to 9.

House of Writers

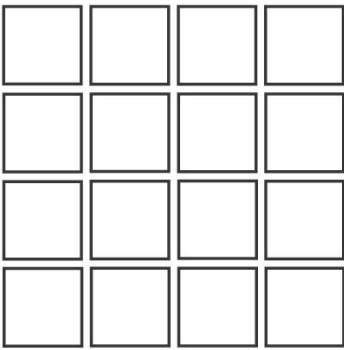
Move two pencils so the house faces east instead of west.



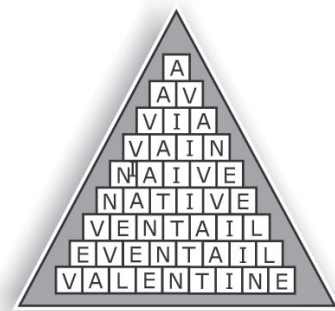
Magic Square

Place the sixteen numbers in the boxes to the right so the columns, rows and diagonals all add up to 34.

- 1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16



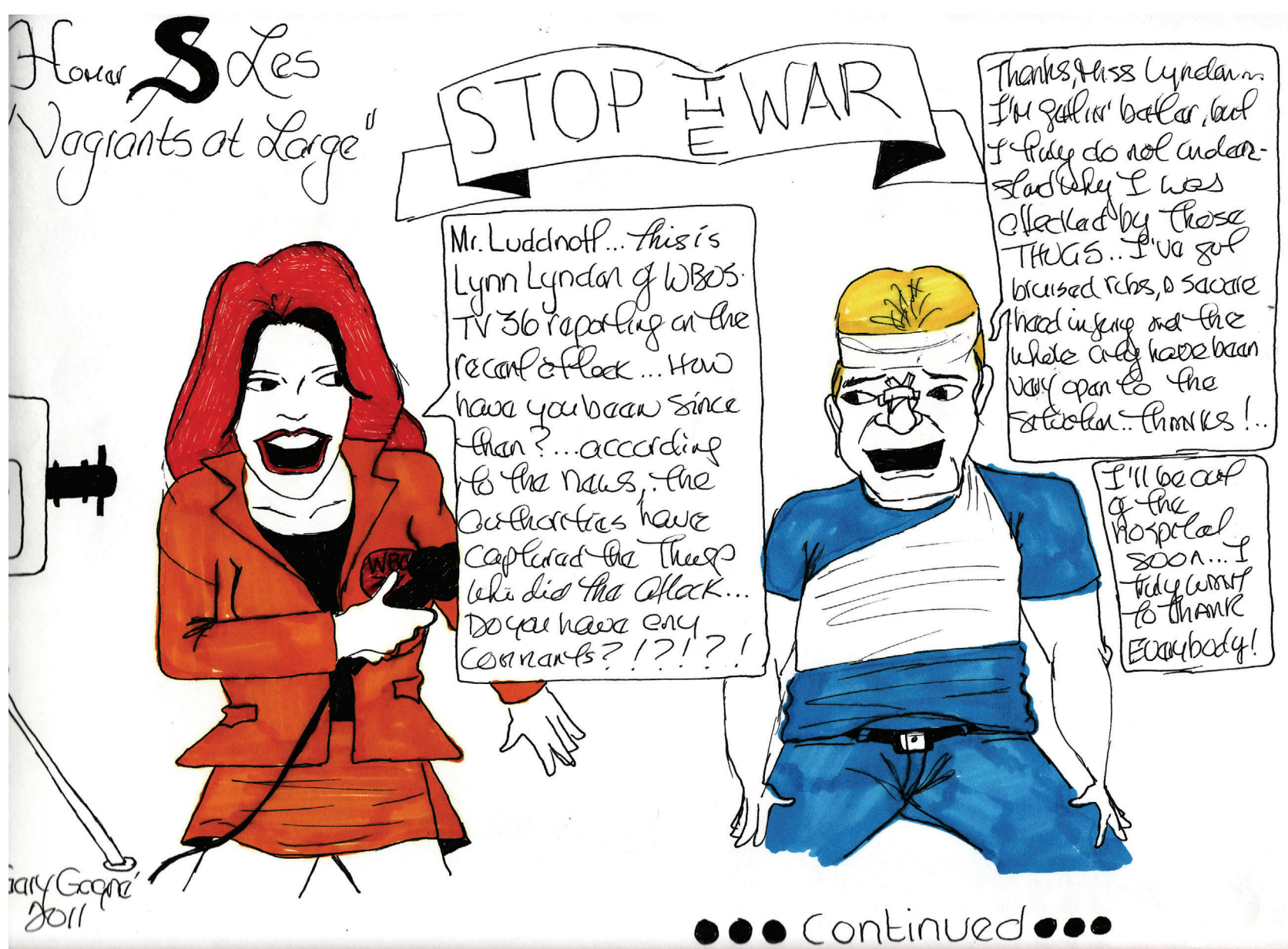
Solutions to last issue's puzzles



- Ruby Auburn
Salmon Coral Titian
Oxblood Florid Sanguine
Cherry Rosy Carmine
Vermeil Crimson
Maroon Cerise Ruddy
Scarlet Russet
Sandy Garnet Claret

1. Paper clip beneath others
2. Shadow on Paper clips
3. Plane background greyed
4. Rear pilot has a scarf
5. Forward pilot has no scarf
6. Plane without tail
7. Propellor's added blur
8. Left support added
9. Right support strut deleted
10. Right wheel flange deleted
11. Graphic zero deleted
12. Hairline deleted from plane image
13. Right wheel strut deleted

9	8	6	4	1	2	3	5	7
4	1	2	3	7	5	6	8	9
5	3	7	9	6	8	1	4	2
1	2	4	8	3	9	7	6	5
3	9	5	7	2	6	4	1	8
6	7	8	5	4	1	9	2	3
7	4	1	2	8	3	5	9	6
8	6	9	1	5	7	2	3	4
2	5	3	6	9	4	8	7	1



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